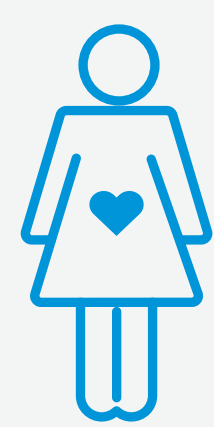


ADDRESSING INEQUITIES IN MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH AT EACH BIRTHING STAGE

The United States is the only high-income country in which the maternal mortality rate has risen over the past two decades. Blue Shield of California is investing in a birthing support system for communities through the inclusion of community-based organization services, doulas, and technology.



LEARNING YOU'RE PREGNANT

Mother's common experience: Pregnancy is where health inequities begin. Mothers are treated as if the pregnancy is a mistake. They feel underprepared because information and resources have been withheld due to system exclusion.

Mother's experience with doula support: Transforms the pregnancy experience. Doulas provide joy and support to welcome baby culturally congruent, trauma-informed. They connect Black birthing communities with community-based organizations and access to any additional support to address social needs (transportation, food, housing, etc.).



MAKING BIRTH PLANS

Mother's common experience: Not feeling supported – concerns not listened to, education around options not freely given. Having decisions made on behalf of the Black birthing community and baby, that might not be the best fit for their wants, personal needs and birth preferences.

Mother's experience with doula support: Being asked, “How are you really doing?” and having concerns heard and addressed appropriately and equitably. Receiving information on birthing plan options, with the inclusion of helpful technology, and having a choice in what the ideal scenario is for them.



DELIVERY

Mother's common experience: Little to no support during and after delivery due to racial health inequities.

Mother's experience with doula support: Doula provides family-centered services, which lend to advocating for black birthing people and baby by listening to their bodies and taking the best course possible to uphold their wishes. When things stray from the plan that was agreed upon, having the doula ask, “is that what you want?” and having them advocate the mother's request to medical staff. Therefore, creating a system that works smoother for the mother and baby, and leads to better health outcomes for both.



POST-PARTUM

Mother's common experience: Health complications for mother and baby due to concerns not being heard and addressed due to racial and implicit bias.

Mother's experience with doula support: Ensuring that mother and baby are happy and healthy up until the child's first birthday, or longer. Continuous support allows for hands-on, personalized health care, resulting in a more equitable approach to maternal and infant health care.